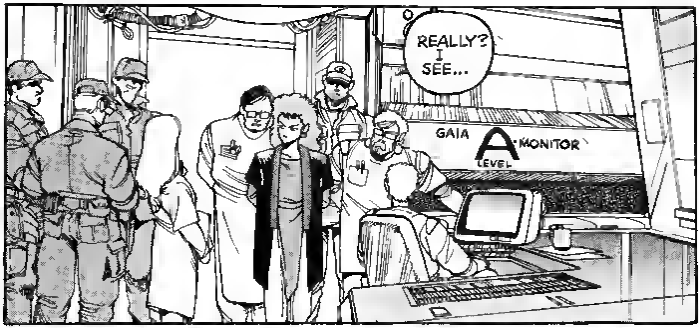
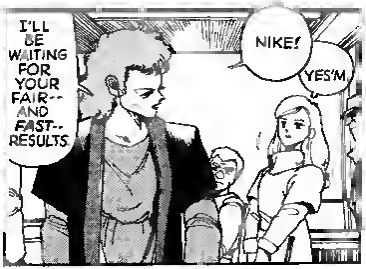
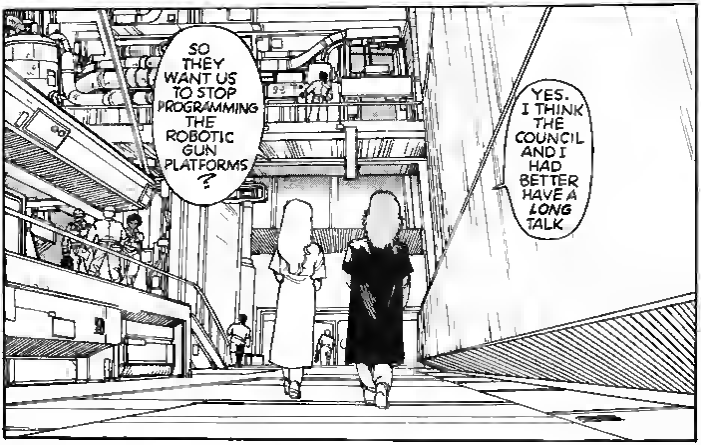
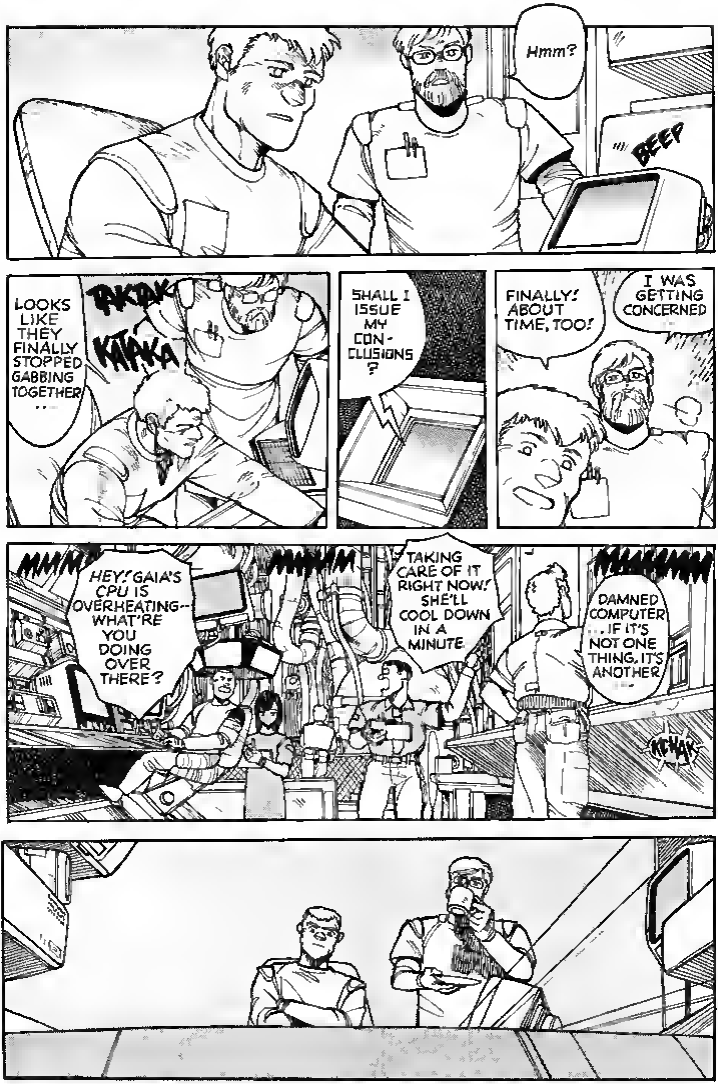
10. HIDE & SEEK Part 2



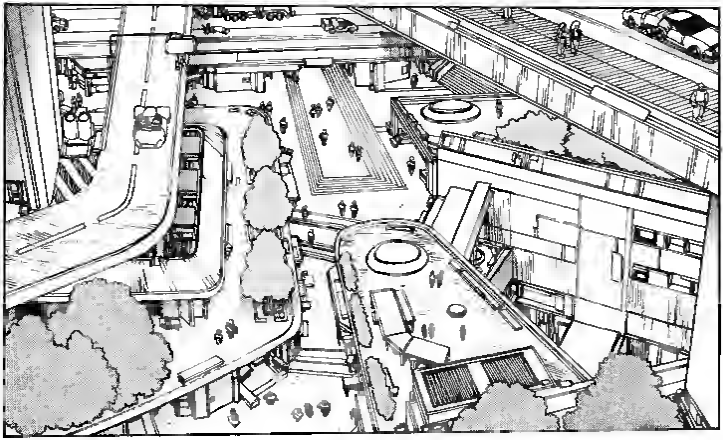


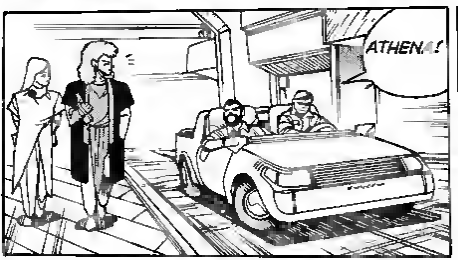



Hmm?
BEEP
LOOKS LIKE THEY FINALLY STOPPED GABBING TOGETHER
TAKTAK
KTAKA
SHALL I ISSUE MY CONCLUSIONS?
FINALLY! ABOUT TIME, TOO!
I WAS GETTING CONCERNED
HEY! GAIA'S CPU IS OVERHEATING--WHAT'RE YOU DOING OVER THERE?
TAKING CARE OF IT RIGHT NOW! SHE'LL COOL DOWN IN A MINUTE.
DAMNED COMPUTER... IF IT'S NOT ONE THING, IT'S ANOTHER
KCHAK

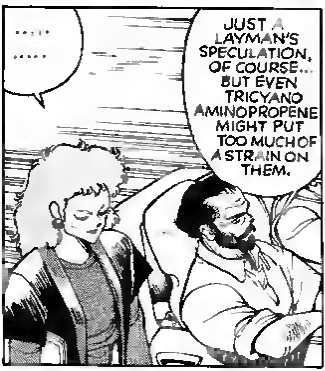
NOW, IF I WERE GAIA..
...THE SAME PROPOSAL THAT MADE YOU SO SUSPICIOUS OF US WOULD MAKE ME SUSPICIOUS OF EVERY BIOROID.
NATURALLY, I'D WANT TO CONSULT AT LENGTH WITH TARTARUS.
AND PROBABLY...
...I'D CONCLUDE THAT BIOROIDS--AND FOR THAT MATTER, THIS ENTIRE SCIENTIFIC UTOPIA--AREN'T WHAT HUMANS REALLY WANT.
SO YOU'RE SUGGESTING THAT THOSE ROBOT GUN PLATFORMS...
...ARE LIKELY TO BECOME THE SAVAGE INSTRUMENTS OF A WRATHFUL GAIA, RIGHT?

THE FACT THAT THIS AFFAIR HAS OCCURRED AT ALL IS A FORE-SHADOWING OF OUR FAILURE.
YOU SHOULD AT LEAST PREPARE FOR THE WORST ...
IF THE GUN PLATFORM PROGRAMMING WENT AS SCHEDULED, IT SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY NOW.
AS LONG AS THIS WARNING ITSELF ISN'T A TRAP...
YOU'RE QUITE PARANOID, ATHENA.
WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE THE REST TO THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT?
I SUPPOSE YOU HAVE THAT SHARK OF YOURS--ARES, ISN'T IT?--OUT CHECKING ON OUR REAL INTENTIONS...
THE REGULAR POLICE ARE MONITORING A FEW OF YOUR GUINEA PIGS, NOTHING MORE.
Hmph!
AT LEAST WE CAN TRUST ARES TO DO AS HE'S TOLD!
ALL RIGHT. I'LL PUT CONTROLS ON THE GUN PLATFORMS.
SATISFIED ...?

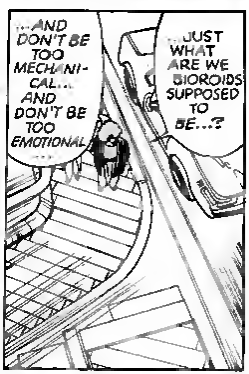


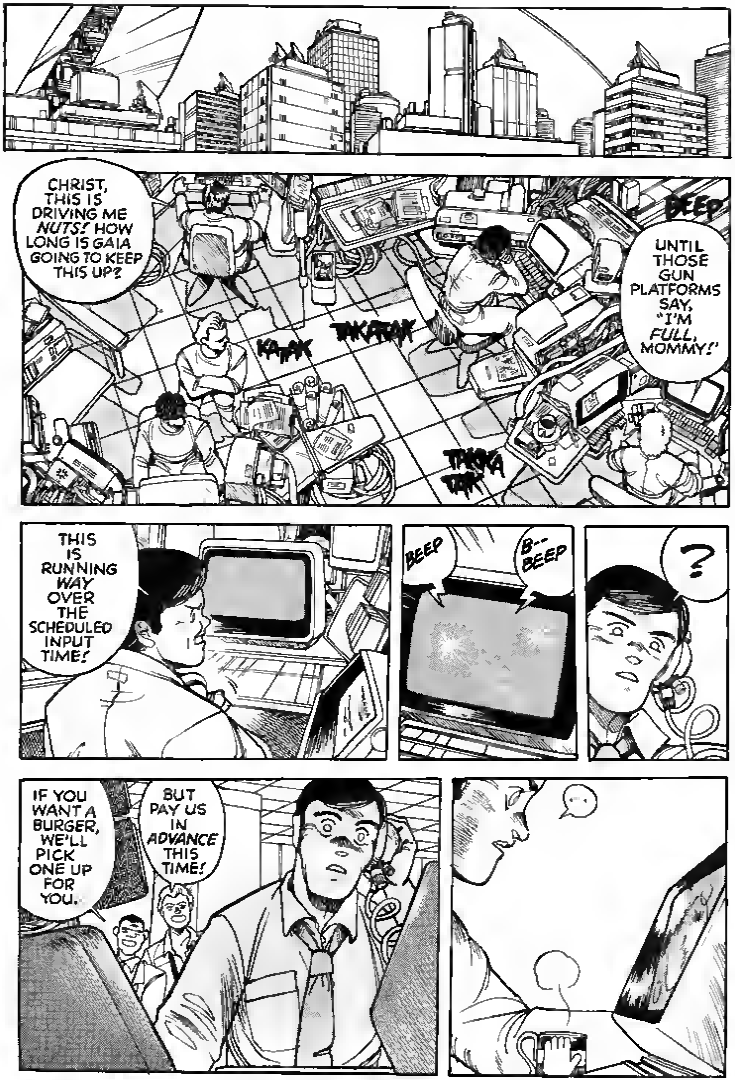

ATHENA!

DON'T PLAY WITH DRUGS THIS TIME, OKAY?

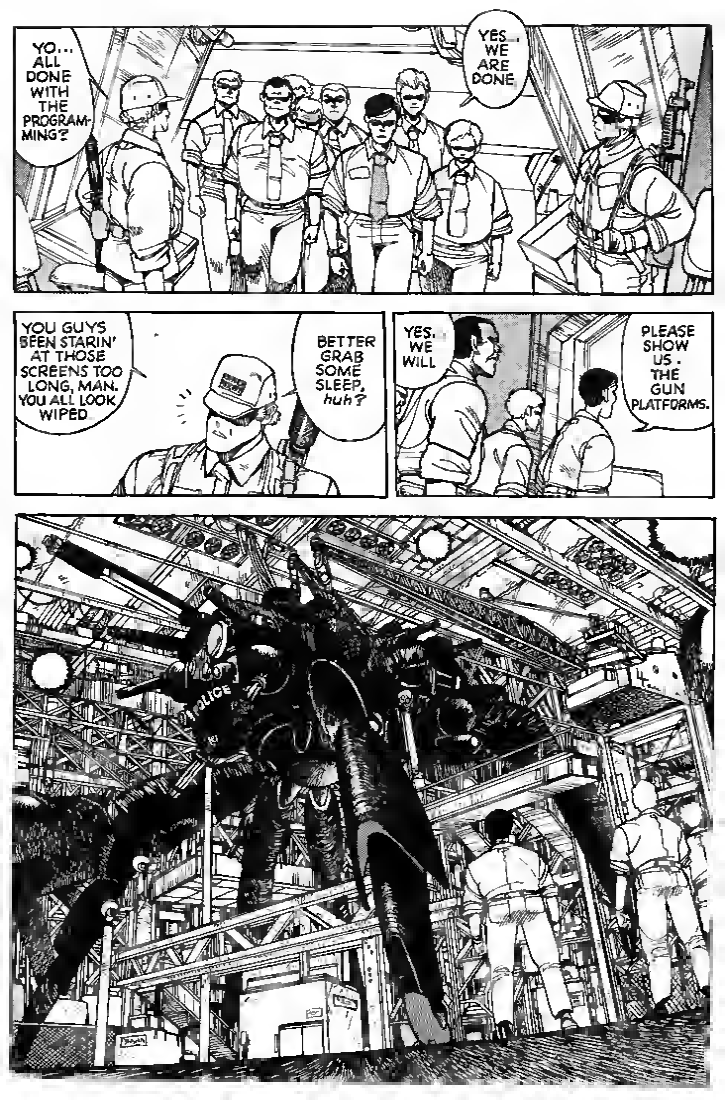

.....
.....
JUST A LAYMAN'S SPECULATION, OF COURSE... BUT EVEN TRICYANO AMINOPROPENE MIGHT PUT TOO MUCH OF A STRAIN ON THEM.

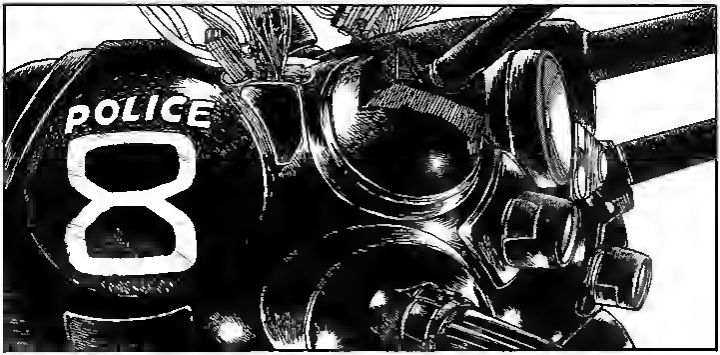
I'M NOT SAYING TO PLAY OSTRICH... BUT DON'T PLAY GOD, EITHER.


...AND DON'T BE TOO MECHANICAL... AND DON'T BE TOO EMOTIONAL.
...
...JUST WHAT ARE WE BIOROIDS SUPPOSED TO BE...?

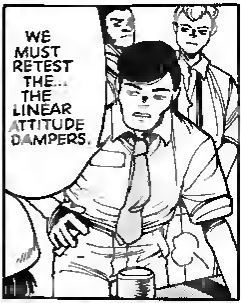

CHRIST, THIS IS DRIVING ME *NUTS!* HOW LONG IS GAIA GOING TO KEEP THIS UP?
KA-RAK
TAK-A-TAK
BEEP
UNTIL THOSE GUN PLATFORMS SAY, "I'M *FULL*, MOMMY!"
TAKKA TAK
THIS IS RUNNING *WAY* OVER THE SCHEDULED INPUT TIME!
BEEP
B-- BEEP
?
IF YOU WANT A BURGER, WE'LL PICK ONE UP FOR YOU.
BUT PAY US IN *ADVANCE* THIS TIME!

HEY, WHAT TH--?
MUSIC--? BUT...
HEY, WHAT'RE YOU GUYS LOOKIN' AT?
Hm?


YO... ALL DONE WITH THE PROGRAM-MING?
YES... WE ARE DONE.
YOU GUYS BEEN STARIN' AT THOSE SCREENS TOO LONG, MAN. YOU ALL LOOK WIPED.
BETTER GRAB SOME SLEEP, huh?
YES. WE WILL.
PLEASE SHOW US. THE GUN PLATFORMS.
POLICE


POLICE

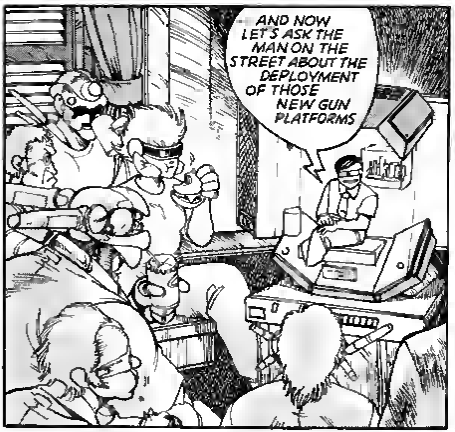
PLEASE RELOAD... WITH LIVE AMMUNITION.
WHAT? YOU KIDDIN'? FOR THE *INNAUGURAL SALUTE?*


WE MUST RETEST THE... THE LINEAR ATTITUDE DAMPERS.

HEY, *HEY!* THE PARADE'S *TOMORROW*, YOU GUYS! MORE TESTS *NOW?* YOU CRAZY OR SOMETHING? YOU GOT *PERMISSION?* ORDERS?
THIS IS.. GAIA'S PERMISSION.

PROBLEMS DON'T CHOOSE.. WHEN TO OCCUR. THE PLATFORMS CAN LOAD THEMSELVES, NOW ..IT WON'T TAKE LONG.

YEAH, SURE. *HEY!!* CART OUT THE LIVE AMMO AND DUMP THOSE DAMN BLANKS *!*
OKAY, OKAY.. shee--it


AND NOW LET'S ASK THE MAN ON THE STREET ABOUT THE DEPLOYMENT OF THOSE NEW GUN PLATFORMS

I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO LIVE ON, AND THEY'RE BLOWING MILLIONS ON THOSE
?!

HEY, IT'S A TOUGH BLOODY WORLD OUT THERE, eh?
IT'LL BE GOOD FOR OUR BUSI-NESS, I SAY!

AW, COME ON-- PUT ON SOMETHING FUNNY, WILL YA, huh?
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE THIS HOSPITAL ALIVE SOMEDAY, SHUT UP!
WHAT?! CALM DOWN, BUDDY!
SO FUN ABOUT SHOWING OTHER PEOPLE'S MISFORTUNE ALL THE TIME? GET YOUR DAMN CAMERA
TRIUMPH OF MODERN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING! MAGNIFICENT! UTTERLY
SSH!
IT'S THE NURSE!
KLIK!
WHOA!
WHSST
...

BRIAREOS...? ARE YOU AWAKE?
HEY...
?!
DEU...
DEUNAN?!
Ah, er, NO, W-WAIT! WE THOUGHT YOU WERE A NURSE!! HE DIDN'T HAVE ANYWHERE ELSE TO HIDE!!
ERK!
WAHH!
LOOK, JUST ASK THE OTHER GUYS!
HEY! WAKE UP!
ZZZ
NO, DON'T WORRY.. I WAS JUST JOKING.. SORRY.
YOU ABOUT STARTLED THE LIFE OUT OF ME! WHY ARE...

I... I CAN'T SLEEP
BRIAREOS H
WANT SOME SLEEPING PILLS? GOT SOME REDS, TOO
KLIK
BRIAREOS ...?
BRIAREOS H
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I'M SO SCARED. ALL BY MYSELF ...
DEUNAN
.....
SOMETIMES I THINK I'M GOING CRAZY. I WORRY IF THERE'S POISON IN THE FOOD. IF THEY'RE FEEDING GAS INTO MY ROOM....

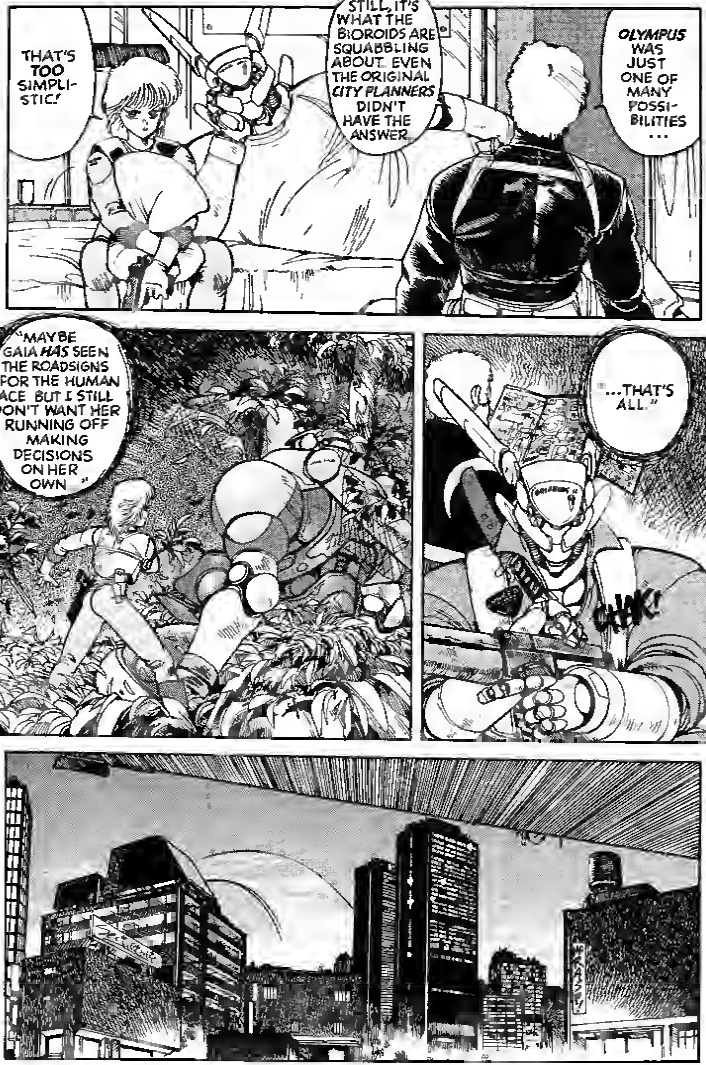
I CAN'T STAND ENEMIES YOU CAN'T SEE!
SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY I'M INVOLVED IN ALL THIS...
EVERY-ONE HAS THEIR LIMITS, DEUNAN.
I'M SORRY... I FEEL LIKE THIS WHOLE THING IS MY FAULT.
THIS CITY... IT'S SO CALM HERE IT'S UNNERVING.
LOOK--LET'S GO BACK TO THE SAME SECURITY PROCEDURES WE USED WHEN WE WERE LIVING IN BADSIDE. NOT AS GOOD AS BEING TOGETHER AGAIN, BUT IT MIGHT HELP... SAFER, TOO.
YEAH.
TOMOKO LIMC
ZZZ

MAYBE TOO SAFE!
?
ZZ
ZZ
Hn...?
HA!
WHA?!
HSST! BRIAREOS! BRI--

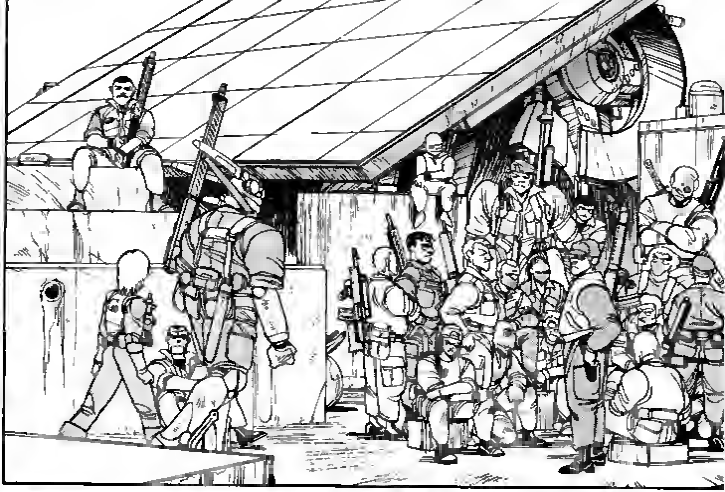
HANDS ON THE BED, PAL!
?!
WHY HELLO, THERE!
LOOK, I'M SORRY I LIED TO YOU BEFORE-- IT'S ME! REMEMBER THIS EYE? FROM THE BERETTA?
HE'S DOSED EVERY-ONE WITH A SEDATIVE!
HAH! I KNEW IT WAS YOU, BY GOD! PRETENDING YOU DIDN'T KNOW ME, YOU BAD BOY...!
I OUGHTA...
NO, W-WAIT! LISTEN TO ME!
THAT EYE MEANS NOTHING! IN THIS CITY THEY CAN FAKE ANYTHING!
I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE... THE FBI's FULL OF GUYS DISGUISED AS BIOROIDS. WE'RE A SPECIAL INFILTRATION UNIT, PLACED BY THE PARANOIDS ON THE OLD PLANNING TEAM.
WE'RE A SAFETY VALVE... WE MONITOR EVERYONE, EVEN THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. AND WHEN SOMETHING GOES HAYWIRE, WE FIX IT.

SO...?
THEY'VE GOT HITOMI. RIGHT? THAT'S BAD.
REAL BAD. I NEED YOUR HELP.
TO GET HITOMI?!
GAIA'S BEEN PROGRAMMED TO SHUT THE WHOLE CITY DOWN.. IF SHE'S LOADED WITH HITOMI'S GENETIC CODE.
IT'D BE BETTER TO HAVE HER WHERE WE CAN GET TO HER IF WE NEED HER.
ESPECIALLY NOW
YOU BELIEVE THIS CRAP?
HOLD ON, DEUNAN
ARUGESS--YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THOSE GUN PLATFORMS, AREN'T YOU?
THE COUNCIL THINKS THEY'RE BAD NEWS
THE DIRECTOR AND ATHENA HAVE AGREED TO FREEZE THEIR DEPLOYMENT, BUT THEY CAN'T CANCEL THE PARADE.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST SPRING HITOMI LEGALLY?
'CAUSE HE'S TRYING TO FRAME US, I BET.

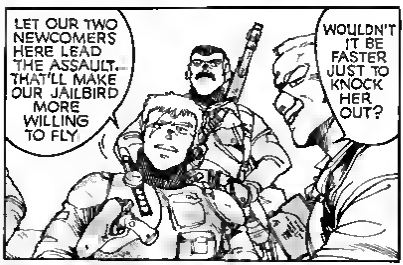
A GOOD HALF OF THE TOP FBI OFFICERS ARE BIOROIDS. IF POSSIBLE, I WANT TO KEEP THIS KEY IN HUMAN HANDS.
NO SPARE, AFTER ALL.
ZNZ
WHY DON'T YOU GUYS DO IT YOURSELF?
WELL, WE'D LIKE BRIAREOS HERE ON OUR SIDE, FOR ONE THING.
. . . .
IT'S OUR FIRST CHANCE TO ESCAPE THIS MAZE.
I WANT TO GO FOR IT.
SO...WHO ARE THE BADDIES? THE BIOROIDS? OR IS THIS "GAIA" TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE WHOLE WORLD?
IT'S STILL NOTHING MORE THAN A POSSIBILITY . . .
...BUT IF SOMETHING DID HAPPEN, IT WOULD BE JUST THE OPPOSITE--GAIA WOULD DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT THE HUMAN RACE.
SEEMS OUR SPECIES HAS JUST TWO OPTIONS LEFT--PURSUE OUR EVERY WANT AND DESIRE, AND THEREBY DRAG THE WHOLE WORLD DOWN TO DESTRUCTION . . .
OR CHANGE OUR VERY NATURE AND PRESERVE THIS PRESENT STERILE UTOPIA IN STASIS FOREVER.

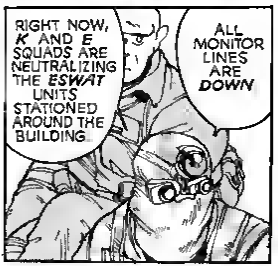

THAT'S TOO SIMPLISTIC!
STILL, IT'S WHAT THE BIOROIDS ARE SQUABBLING ABOUT. EVEN THE ORIGINAL CITY PLANNERS DIDN'T HAVE THE ANSWER.
OLYMPUS WAS JUST ONE OF MANY POSSIBILITIES ...
"MAYBE GAIA HAS SEEN THE ROADSIGNS FOR THE HUMAN RACE. BUT I STILL DON'T WANT HER RUNNING OFF MAKING DECISIONS ON HER OWN."
"...THAT'S ALL."
CHAK!

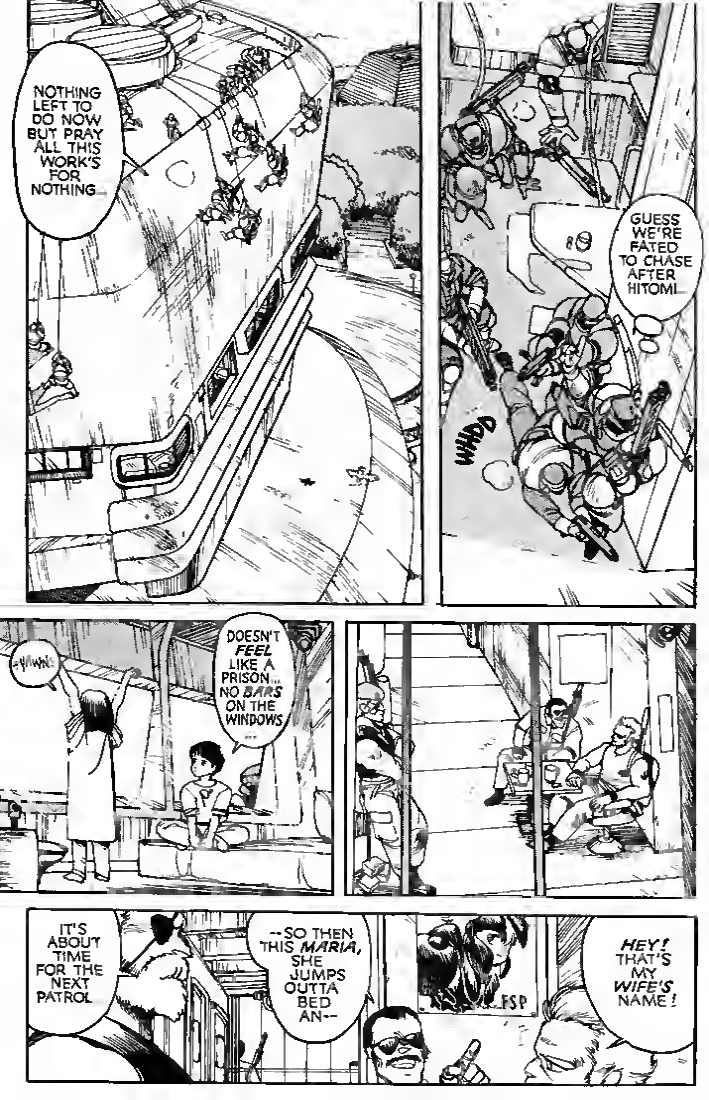
OLYMPUS CRIME ANALYSIS AND REMAND CENTER
...
ARE YOU FEELING ALL RIGHT?
IT IT'S LIKE THE TIME WHEN CHIFFON
SLAM
AMATEUR!
DON'T TRUST ARUGESS.. TRUST IN ME!
.... SORRY..



KOTUS...
?!
JEEZ, WHO TAUGHT HIM TO DO THAT?
--NEXT, YOUR SQUAD HAS TWO MINUTES TO BRING OUT THE MARK. THE NEXT PATROL ARRIVES ONE MINUTE AFTER THAT-- G SQUAD WILL SILENCE THEM.


LET OUR TWO NEWCOMERS HERE LEAD THE ASSAULT. THAT'LL MAKE OUR JAILBIRD MORE WILLING TO FLY
WOULDN'T IT BE FASTER JUST TO KNOCK HER OUT?


RIGHT NOW, K AND E SQUADS ARE NEUTRALIZING THE ESWAT UNITS STATIONED AROUND THE BUILDING.
ALL MONITOR LINES ARE DOWN


NOTHING LEFT TO DO NOW BUT PRAY ALL THIS WORK'S FOR NOTHING...
GUESS WE'RE FATED TO CHASE AFTER HITOMI...
WHOP
DOESN'T *FEEL* LIKE A PRISON... NO *BARS* ON THE WINDOWS...
--WHAAN--
IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR THE NEXT PATROL
--SO THEN THIS *MARIA*, SHE JUMPS OUTTA BED AN--
FSP
HEY! THAT'S MY *WIFE'S* NAME!

SO I'LL GO SHOW THOSE ESWAT BASTARDS THE STAFF LIST FOR THE NEXT WATCH.
--SHE LIVES IN THIS LITTLE WHITE HOUSE WITH A BLUE FENCE OVER IN DISTRICT THREE.
Uh, THAT HOUSE WOULDN'T HAVE A STAINED GLASS DOOR, WOULD IT?
Uh, YEAH.
HEY, YOU GUYS STAY SHARP, WILL YA?
THAT'S MY HOUSE! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!!
HUP!
WATCH IT!
phut
OKAY ...

FLAT
!
AAA!
WHA?!
Huh?
heh heh
TAK TAKTAK TAK
4, 1, 8, 3, P, E, T, O, L, I, S, I, H, K, 6
MMMMM
BEEP

4 1
8 3
p
beep
beep
beep
beep
KSSSSHHHH
KSHANG
KSHANG
KSHANG
Eh?!
Eh!?
KSSHH
WE'RE OUTTA HERE IN TWO MINUTES! GET A MOVE ON!

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